



For Immediate Release
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**ROMNEY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES
FOREST FIRE AWARENESS WEEK APRIL 17-23, 2005**

Today, because April is historically the month in which forest fire danger is the highest – and as the National Weather Service posted a fire warning for Southern New England – Governor Mitt Romney is joining other New England governors in proclaiming April 17-23, 2005 as "Forest Fire Awareness Week."

Today's National Weather Service warning is due to a rise in temperature, drop in relative humidity, decrease in moisture in natural fuels and drying winds, all of which increase the threat of wildfire. Fire threat conditions are expected to continue and increase next week and possibly through the duration of the Massachusetts open burning season, which ends May 1st.

Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Acting Commissioner Stephen R. Pritchard is encouraging all citizens to use caution while visiting the state forests and parks, and to be conscious of increased fire weather conditions when burning brush, cane, driftwood and forestry debris at home.

Acting Commissioner Pritchard said, "The legal season for permitted open burning is nearly over in many of our communities. It is critical that people be aware of the increased risk of these fires going out of control due to weather factors as they try to get all of their controlled burning done before the season closes on May 1st."

DCR's Bureau of Forest Fire Control has joined its fellow Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Commission (NFFPC) members in promoting an increased awareness of forest fire danger. "Increasing awareness by all residents and visitors will go a long way towards helping them protect their lives, personal property and the public lands and forests that we all enjoy," said DCR's Acting Chief Fire Warden Philip Gilmore.

"Individuals and families should be especially aware of forest fire when enjoying the outdoors during the coming spring vacation break, and to make an effort to be extra careful with campfires, cooking coals, and matches," Gilmore added.

The NFFPC is made up of the six New England states, New York, the provinces of Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the New England National Forests.

MITT ROMNEY
Governor

KERRY HEALEY
Lt. Governor

ELLEN ROY HERZFELDER
Secretary

STEPHEN R. PRITCHARD
Acting Commissioner



Massachusetts' Fire Prevention Specialists suggest the following *FireWise* tips to help property owners protect their homes from wildfire loss:

- Chip or compost vegetative debris piles.
- Clean your roof and gutters and remove leaves, branches and other debris from your yard to prevent burning embers from a wildfire igniting your home.
- Move the remainder of your woodpile, lumber, or other burnable debris to at least 30 feet from any buildings.
- Check the spark arresters on your combustible engines in equipment such as lawn mowers, ATVs, dirt bikes and chain saws.

For more information about the Wildland Fire Urban Interface and about creating or maintaining a defensible space around your home, contact your nearest Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Bureau of Forest Fire Control office. Additional information can be found at: www.mass.gov/dem/programs/firecont

Related links: www.nffpc.org or www.firewise.org

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